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Fletcher, America's First School for Diplomats, Turning 50 Amid Changes

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BOSTON, April 3 — Fifty years ago, when the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University sent its first class of 21 into the world, the straightforward hope was that most of them would become professional diplomats.

Many did and some still do. The current United States Ambassador to El Salvador, Thomas R. Pickering, is a Fletcher alumnus, as are his two immediate predecessors, Deane R. Hinton and Robert E. White.

The State Department's need, however, for Foreign Service officers has slumped in recent years. At the same time, many Fletcher graduates have taken jobs with multinational corporations and some with the Central Intelligence Agency.

Situated in nearby Medford, the Fletcher School, America's first graduate school of diplomacy, has changed accordingly, as have such comparable graduate schools as Columbia University's School of International Affairs and Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced and International Studies.

The curriculum now includes courses in international financial management and accounting, country risk analysis, international business policy and strategic management, foreign exchange management and international markets, and international tax planning and accounting.

Though many graduates apply their new knowledge in the private sector, school officials estimate that seven or eight students from the class of 1984, nearly as many as plan to join the State Department as diplomats, will work for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Fletcher, which has a worldwide reputation for serious and demanding scholarship, is now celebrating its first half-century with a gala that will culminate Friday when Dean Rusk, the former Secretary of State, George W. Ball, former Representative to the United Nations, Warren M. Christopher, America's principal negotiator in the Iranian hostage crisis, and other diplomatic luminaries will address the school on foreign policy and the Presidential campaign. Henry A. Kissinger,

the former Secretary of State, had planned to participate but canceled over the weekend in the face of an impending protest by Boston-area college students opposed to United States policies in Central America.

Some Concerns Are Noted

Amid the festivities, however, some worries have been voiced.

Jean Mayer, the French-born nutritionist who took over as Tufts president in 1976, has been concerned about Fletcher's "hawkish reputation" but feels it has diminished since 1979, when he appointed a new dean, Theodore L. Eliot Jr., a career Foreign Service officer and former Ambassador to Afghanistan. But Mr. Mayer said in a recent interview he had encountered difficulties making changes in the Fletcher faculty, which is heavily tenured and has few women or members of minorities.

"If you're going to deal with the problems of the world," Mr. Mayer said, "then one of the first things you're going to have to learn is that the vast majority of the world is neither white nor male."

Another concern, voiced by Alan K. Henrikson, associate professor of diplomatic history, is that the trend toward business courses may have gone too far. A Fletcher student, he observed, can now earn the degree of master of arts in law and diplomacy without knowing much about international law or politics. "It's not to that kind of student that I'd like to give the Fletcher signature," he said.

Costs Cast a Shadow

Others at Fletcher worry, as officials do elsewhere, that tuition costs are skewing Fletcher's admissions policy and its graduates' careers.

Prof. Uri Ra'anani, chairman of the international security studies committee, calls himself "the house radical" on tuition. A refugee from Hitler's Europe in 1939, Professor Ra'anani said he was one of only two faculty members of genuinely "proletarian origins" and that Fletcher should spend more money on scholarships for the poor and for older students.

A Fletcher education is not cheap: Tuition will be \$3,600 next year. The dean of admissions, Charles N. Shane, said the need to repay debts drove Fletcher graduates into the private sector. "It's so expensive to go to a school like this, they're not going to work for CARE or Unicef or something," he said. "We find this very distressing."

Foreign students make up more than a third of the school's enrollment, an old tradition at Fletcher, and it is a tough school to enter. There are more than eight times as many people who apply as are admitted.

The school's requirements are so difficult that only 20 percent of the students accomplish the task in two years, according to Jonathan W. Palmer, director of career and student services.

Classes are rather quiet and the usual teaching method is "rarely Socratic," said Steven Herzog, a second-year student. Mr. Herzog, who comes from San Jose, Calif., and who graduated from Dartmouth College before entering Fletcher. He has been working in his spare time with a Fletcher program that helps settle Southeast Asian refugees around Boston and hopes to find a job in the energy department of a commercial bank and later to move into an energy consultancy.

He said the school's new business courses, with their emphasis on case study, involved more interaction between students and teachers than other courses did.

In a recent class on the international monetary system, Prof. Benjamin J. Cohen lectured a small but crowded theater on exchange rates. Shooting out a question about the effects of domestic inflation on a country's export and import prices, and getting an answer that sounded like shorthand, he said crisply, "The answer was perfectly right; I just wanted it spelled out."

More than half the class of 1984 was younger than 24 when admitted to

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